

Inhibiting research

Paul C. Engel

Journal of Enzyme Inhibition. Editor-in-chief H.J. Smith. Harwood. 4 issues per volume (see page 372). \$270 (institutional), \$184 (individual).

FROM a purely academic standpoint, the scope announced in the title of *Journal of Enzyme Inhibition* seems remarkably narrow. Why not a journal for enzyme activation or enzyme denaturation?

The case for enzyme inhibition lies in the practical importance of the topic, especially in the design and testing of drugs and poisons. This automatically entails considerable overlap with the subject areas covered by such journals as *Biochemical Pharmacology*, *Journal of Medicinal Chemistry* and *Journal of Antibiotics*. There is, however, much to be said for a choice of journals in an active area. In this case, the declared orientation towards a type of biochemical system, rather than a single application, readily allows inclusion of general or theoretical papers that would otherwise be forced into purely biochemical journals.

Only four slim issues of *Journal of Enzyme Inhibition* have appeared over two years. This has meant a long publication delay for at least some papers, but the ultimate intention is to settle down at something approaching a quarterly publication interval.

Each issue so far contains six to eight articles. Most are full-length original papers, but there has also been a conference report on elastase inhibitors in the treatment of emphysema and a review article on renin inhibitors as potential therapeutic agents. Both are welcome features. The leading figures in a rapidly moving field are often reluctant to take time off from primary publication in order to write reviews, and a journal can perform a useful function in commissioning them. Conference reports, summarizing the current state of the debate for those unable to attend a meeting, are also valuable.

Unfortunately, the account of the Bethesda workshop on elastase inhibitors is not a good example to guide future reporters. It is curiously de-personalized, with no attribution of opinions, and no references, so that the piece does not even serve as a review. Although the pertinent issues are well aired, the newcomer is offered no easy entry to the field. This, however, is not a criticism of the journal's basic intention to include such reports. The elastase report had already appeared elsewhere, and perhaps the editors of the new journal will take a firmer line with articles they have specifically commissioned to ensure that they

faithfully convey the flavour of active discussion.

Despite the slow start, the journal has attracted papers by a number of well-respected workers, and has covered a commendably wide range of topics. On the one hand there are papers of obvious pharmacological interest on renin, GABA transaminase, acetyl cholinesterase, NADPH-cytochrome P450 reductase and so on, but equally there are papers on the interaction of alkaloids with yeast alcohol dehydrogenase, on mechanism-based inactivation of yeast pyruvate decarboxylase, and on the kinetics of modification-induced protein unfolding.

In all, this journal should interest a

substantial body of readers involved in pharmaceutical and toxicological aspects of enzymology. For them it will serve a useful function by drawing together both the practical and the more theoretical aspects of enzyme inhibition.

One final technical point: although the inclusion of colour plates for histochemical illustrations is very welcome, the quality of the half-tones is disappointing. The ordinary paper used for the text is not really of good enough quality for photographs, and it is pointless to show a stereo model of an enzyme (renin) unless it is well reproduced. □

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An insight into infection

Clive Sweet

Microbial Pathogenesis. Editor-in-chief Helena Mäkelä. Academic. 12/yr. UK £135 (institutional), £52 (individual); North America \$248 (institutional), \$78 (individual).

Microbial Pathogenesis was launched by Academic Press to provide a focus for publication of research on the molecular and cellular biology of infectious disease. The appearance of the journal is timely, because the rapid advances in molecular biology are being applied with much success to infectious disease; also, it fills a niche that other journals have attempted to accommodate by inclusion of sections devoted to microbial pathogenesis.

While the existing journals essentially cater for specific groups of pathogens — for example viruses in the *Journal of Virology* and bacteria in *Infection and Immunity* — *Microbial Pathogenesis* covers all pathogens, from viruses to parasites, because it recognizes that there are features common to infections produced by different kinds of agents and hence the emergence of pathogenicity as an identifiable research area. As yet, contributions on bacterial pathogenesis outnumber those on viral pathogenesis by about three to one, and only the occasional paper has appeared on yeast and protozoa, possibly reflecting the relative activities in these areas of research.

Studies of pathogenesis also require a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing upon pathology, microbiology, immunology, physiology, biochemistry and genetics. All of them are encompassed within this one publication.

The journal has an international character, with an editorial board representing ten countries, although Europe and North

America predominate. Similarly, few papers from outside Europe and North America have yet appeared. The speed of publication is reasonably rapid — generally within six months of the acceptance date — but there may be up to a further four months additional delay from submission to acceptance largely occurring when revisions are necessary. That the latter are frequently required testifies to the intention of the editors and their editorial board to establish a high standard for the journal, which so far it has attained. The quality and standard of production is also high, with clear tables, line drawings and half-tone figures. Short communications are accepted but they are not rapid publications. Occasional mini-reviews and book

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reviews are also included. Fifty free reprints are offered and there are no page charges.

A journal dedicated to this area, but independent of the rather dominant and well known American journals, must be a good thing for authors outside the United States who often feel aggrieved by the high page charges and occasional xenophobia among referees. That the journal does meet a need is evidenced by an increase from six to twelve issues per year. This has inevitably reduced the number of articles from an average of ten per issue to eight per issue, and the number of pages from an average of 99 to 79 per issue.

Although *Microbial Pathogenesis* might appear to be merely yet another new journal in an area not without existing coverage, I feel that it deserves to succeed. Because of its aims, appositeness and quality, its future should be assured. □

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